



# Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Planning Newsletter

July, 2001

## Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Update



The Lower Wolf River Bottomland planning staff have been busy the past several months evaluating criteria and determining which lands best meet the criteria, preparing for more public listening sessions, town board meetings, and updates to the Natural Resources Board. The following is an update of our activities, summary of public meetings held, and a tentative outline for the project's next steps.

On May 23, Jill Mrotek presented a short slide presentation to the Natural Resources Board. The purpose was to update them on the progress of the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands project and inform them of future public meetings to be held on the planning staff's boundary analysis. The presentation went well, and the Board continues to be receptive to this project.

### Public Meetings Summary

On June 12 and 14, 2001 the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands planning team hosted two public meetings to share and discuss the team's boundary analysis work. These meetings were held at the Town of Maine and Town of Winchester halls. Approximately 80 people attended these meetings and provided some good discussions. Both of the meetings' formats were the same; a slide presentation, reviewing progress to date and staff's boundary analysis, followed by a facilitated group discussion on presented materials and future steps for this project. At these meetings the following points were discussed.

- ♦ Preserving agricultural lands. Staff asked if this criterion should be raised to the higher level of a goal for this project. The planning team recognizes the importance of having agricultural lands in the landscape. It provides cover for many species, soil building aspects, beautiful rural scenery, food sources, erosion protection in some cases, and a livelihood for many families within our project area. Staff also explained that if the land falls out of production for crops, that exploring options to keep the land open by converting it into wildlife habitat, CRP, and/or trees, rather than into other developments is preferable if a landowner is interested.
- ♦ Mapping of five criteria suggested by staff. The planning team suggested that to help focus our land protection efforts that there are 5 (out of the 9 criteria) that might best achieve this project's vision and goals. Staff outlined why particular land areas meet the 5 selected criteria.

Overall the comments were very supportive of work the planning staff completed during the winter months. Meeting attendees were supportive of the changing of the agricultural criterion to a goal statement. In addition, they supported the five criteria selected by staff as the highest priority criteria, which will help us achieve the mission of this project. Concerns over condemnation of lands, specific property management, and zoning changes were addressed as they arose.

### Next Steps

The planning staff will need to define what the Department's role is as it relates to land acquisition within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands project area. We will be using the analyses done by staff and the comments received from the public meetings to do this. This information will be prepared into a document for your review. This document will include a proposed acquisition goal. This acquisition goal will reflect the Department's initial intent in the purchase of lands, both fee title and easement for target areas within the proposed boundary. Staff will be attending upcoming town board meetings (all 22 townships) with an update, and will hold a minimum of one public hearing, prior to presenting this information to the Natural Resources Board later this year. A complete environmental impact statement is being drafted, which will also be presented for public review this fall. ☞

Comments or questions, please contact Jill Mrotek at 920/492-5830, email: [mrotej@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:mrotej@dnr.state.wi.us), or 1125 N. Military Ave Green Bay, WI 54307.



*Meeting participants during slide presentation on June 12, 2001 at the Town of Maine.*

# Visualizing the Future

As mentioned previously in the meeting summary, Department staff looked at the nine criteria that were established for this project last year at public meetings, and selected what they believed were the five that best achieve this projects mission. Those five criteria are:

1. **Protect the Lower Wolf River and its tributaries river shoreline.**
2. **Provide an opportunity for a corridor connection for wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.**
3. **Protect areas with endangered and threatened resources, and critical habitats.**
4. **Include spawning areas for protection and habitat management.**
5. **Include larger tracts of land that promote ecological and/or recreational opportunities.**

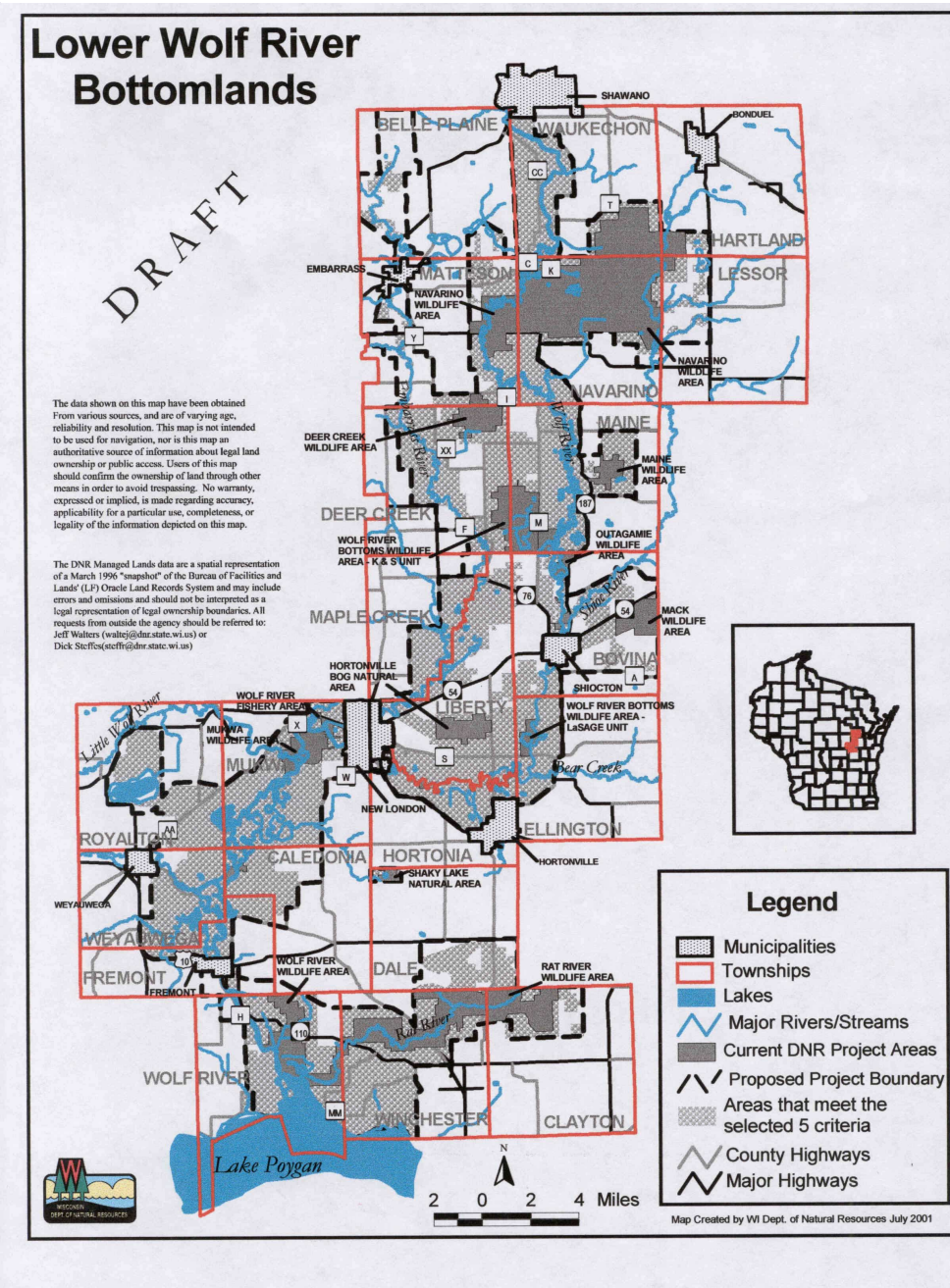
Department staff shaded in lands within the project boundary that fit into those five criteria. The result is the hatch-marked area on the map below. Also depicted on the map are the Townships, major road systems, and waterways. The dark shaded areas on the map show the Department's current project boundaries, such as Navarino, Deer Creek, and the Rat River Wildlife Areas.

As you can see on the map, most of the proposed project boundary is hatch-marked in. This represents areas that are

important for special management and protection using the 5 criteria above. This also supports what planning participants have told us during the public meetings we have held...that this Wolf and Embarrass Rivers system is a natural resources treasure that should be protected and maintained for future generations.

The planning team will be working towards establishing an acquisition goal within the next few months. We are not looking to purchase land or easements for the entire area within the proposed project boundary. Rather, the acquisition goal will target those selected areas that may be important for the Department to purchase over the long term from willing sellers. In addition, we will be hoping to work with landowners and partnership groups on a voluntary basis to accomplish protection and management goals over the larger area. ☺

"When the only tool you own is a hammer, every problem begins to resemble a nail."  
Abraham Maslow



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# Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Vision, Goals & Criteria

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## Draft Vision

The Lower Wolf River Bottomlands will be managed recognizing the interconnectedness of air, water, and land in sustaining ecosystems in balance with local cultural and economic values. In partnership with citizens as stewards of the natural resources, we work to protect, restore, maintain, and enhance healthy, diverse ecosystems and the natural, scenic beauty of the corridor, while providing compatible recreational pursuits and educational opportunities for current and future generations.

## Draft Goals

The land along the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands is protected through ecologically sound management decisions that reflect long-term considerations for healthy ecosystems.

The Lower Wolf River Bottomlands protects the quality and quantity of surface and groundwater resources.

All citizens share the responsibility for the stewardship of the natural resources in the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands for the benefit of current and future generations.

The public has opportunities to experience a diverse range of compatible outdoor recreational and educational activities that enhance the quality of life and economy within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands.

The Lower Wolf River Bottomlands provides opportunities to preserve agricultural land through creative land manage-

## Criteria for Identifying Conservation and Recreation Lands within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands

**\*Protect the Lower Wolf River and its tributaries river shoreline.** The area is seeing increasing pressures for development; citizens feel there is a need to protect the natural resources and scenic qualities within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands.

**\*Provide an opportunity for a corridor connection for wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.** Connection between open spaces are important for the biological diversity of many wildlife species and plant and animal communities. Recreational activities can also be provided by providing linear trails and increasing the size of properties to allow for more diverse activities.

**Provide opportunities for habitat restoration.** Maintaining, protecting, and improving the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands wetlands will provide for improved and enhanced water quality, shoreline protection, and wildlife habitat.

**\*Protect areas with endangered and threatened resources, and critical habitats.** For example, the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands corridor has been identified as the best bottomland hardwoods in WI. This area has a high potential for sensitive bottomland forest and wildlife species as well as many other significant natural features.

**Protect lakes with minimal development.** There are relatively few undeveloped lakes within the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands, protecting these rare resources will help preserve them for the future.

**\*Include spawning areas for protection and habitat management.** The Lower Wolf River provides spawning habitat for walleye and sturgeon, to enhance these habitats additional lands to buffer and connect existing areas should be considered for a variety of fish species.

**Improve the potential for fish and wildlife and other recreational/educational opportunities.** For example, expand the boundary along the Lower Wolf River corridor to include other lands because most of the existing wildlife areas are wetland, which limits access. Also, provide for additional shoreland access (i.e. shore fishing opportunities).

**\*Include larger tracts of land that promote ecological and/or recreational opportunities.** As demands for land increases for development, recreational pursuits, and wildlife habitat the affordability and availability of larger acreage's decreases. Larger, continuous parcels of land provide for better land management, recreational pursuits, and hunting and trapping opportunities.

**Improve boundary definition for better land management and public access.** Avoid trespass problems and user confusion about the location of boundary by expanding property boundaries to nearby roads, and establishing a more linear boundary where necessary.

(Please note that text behind the bolded criteria are just meant to give a brief explanation of criteria.)

☼ Suggested agricultural goal statement

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